

Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend the paragraph on page 1, lines 9 - 11 as follows:

This invention relates to an optical fiber retaining method and apparatus thereof suitable for holding a plurality of optical fibers in ~~[[on]]~~ a predetermined position.

Please amend the paragraph from page 1, line 28 to page 2, line 1, as follows:

When optical fibers in two optical cables are connected together, it is necessary to pull the optical fibers out of each cable and to hold the fibers in ~~[[on]]~~ predetermined positions. Such methods for pulling out and retaining optical fibers are disclosed in Japanese Laid-Open Patent No. 2001-108840 ~~[[2001-108440]]~~ and U.S. Patent No. 6,438,300.

Please amend the paragraph on page 3, lines 8 - 26, as follows:

Since many optical fibers are contained in an optical cable, it is desirable to provide a retainer capable of retaining a larger number of optical fibers together. When the splice procedure is considered, it is desirable to have a plurality of optical fibers ribbonized. To take those demands into consideration, the number of optical fibers to be held ~~[[hold]]~~ in a single shrink tube is limited to 8 to 16. When it is desired to retain optical fibers exceeding this limit in a lump, it is necessary to provide a plurality of shrink tubes. In this case, when the configuration disclosed in the

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aforementioned U.S. patent is used, the distance between optical fibers fixed in two separated shrink tubes becomes larger than the sum of thickness of two supports since the ribbonized optical fibers are sandwiched by two supports in each shrink tube. The more positions to retain optical fibers pulled out from one optical cable are apart, the more the distance between a retainer and the optical cable lengthens. If the distance is not long enough, the optical fibers are forced to bend in a short curvature radius, as a result, the loss becomes larger.

Please amend the paragraph on page 4, lines 15 - 28, as follows:

According to the invention, an optical fiber retainer comprises a first optical fiber holder to contain ~~[[a]]~~ first ribbonized optical fibers and a first support with a semicylindrical section and to hold the first ribbonized optical fibers adjacent to a side of the first support, a second optical fiber retainer to contain ~~[[a]]~~ second ribbonized optical fibers and a second support with a semicylindrical section and to hold the second ribbonized optical fibers adjacent to a side of the second support, and a stand to hold the first and second optical fiber retainers so that the first ribbonized optical fibers held by the first optical fiber holder and the second ribbonized optical fibers held by the second optical fiber holder are close to each other.